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West Mexican Conference

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Enrique Ignacio Bernal Ordorica has been a district pastor, director of the departments of Stewardship, Health, Spirit of Prophecy and Ministerial Secretariat. He has been the president of West Mexican Conference since 2012. He has bachelor's degrees in theology from the University of Montemorelos and psychology from the Universidad del Valle de Atemajac in Guadalajara, and a master's degree in religion from Andrews University (Montemorelos University campus). He and his wife Edéniz Ponce S. have three children.

The West Mexican Conference is part of the North Mexican Union Conference in the Inter-American Division of the

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Territory and Statistics

The West Mexican Conference covers the western part of the country of Mexico. It is made up of three states: Jalisco, Nayarit, and Colima. Its headquarters are in Guadalajara, Mexico.¹

According to April 2019 statistics, the West Mexican Conference had 68 churches and 88 organized Sabbath Schools, making a total of 156 groups with 13,932 church members. These churches are served by nine pastors with ministerial credentials; 14 pastors with ministerial licenses; 11 employees with missionary credentials; and 29 employees with missionary licenses.²

Institutions

Western School was founded in 1964 in the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco. Levels: elementary, middle school, and high school.

Colima School was founded in 1987 in the city of Colima, Colima. Levels: preschool and elementary.

Nueva Galicia School was founded in 1994 in the city of Tepic, Nayarit. Levels: preschool, elementary, and middle school.

Ciudad Granja Clinic was inaugurated in 1970. It has a magnificent plot of 6,530 square meters (1.6 acres). It is currently not operated by the Adventist organization.

The campground has 14 hectares (about 35 acres) of prime land, acquired in 2002, located about 30 kilometers (about 18.5 miles) from Guadalajara, near Lake Chapala. This camp is currently under development.³

Origins of Adventist Work in the Territory

On February 17, 1893, the General Conference sent the first missionary team to the country of Mexico. This team was composed of a multidisciplinary group of missionaries led by Dan T. Jones. Other members of the team included Lillis Wood, nurses Ida Crawford and Mrs. Cooper, and a teacher, Ora A. Osborne. They were instructed to settle in the city of Guadalajara, located in western Mexico.⁴

The evangelistic method used in the city of Guadalajara is described by Dr. Ciro Sepúlveda:

The Urban Mission was an evangelistic method that became very popular in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States at the end of the 19th century. To understand the early efforts of Adventists in Mexico, it is essential to explain what an urban mission was. In 1890, most large cities in the United States had already established urban missions. This consisted of a team of Christians with different competencies who worked together for the proclamation of the Gospel. The team was usually composed of a pastor, a doctor, several nurses, and a teacher. They coordinated the execution of a clinic, school and the care of a chapel to meet the needs of men and women living in their communities. It was this kind of mission that was sent to Mexico in 1894.⁵

The first Adventist missionary team arrived in Mexico in January 1894. They established their headquarters in the city of Guadalajara. This city saw the birth of the first organized Adventist Church in Mexico.⁶ The first Adventist hospital outside the United States was inaugurated in this city on January 1, 1899. The first Adventist school in Mexico, for the children of missionaries and hospital employees, opened in Guadalajara. And the first issue of the first Adventist publication in Spanish, called "The Friend of Truth," was published in Guadalajara on January 1, 1896. For these and other historical reasons, Guadalajara is known as "the Official Cradle of Adventism in Mexico."⁷

The two most prominent characters in the establishment of the Adventist work in Mexico were Dan T. Jones and George Washington Caviness. The General Conference also sent C. L. Chadwick to explore the Mexican territory with a view to its evangelization in 1891.⁸ That same year, Jones officially introduced Adventism in Mexico. A missionary from Missouri, U.S.A., Jones came with his family to Guadalajara, Mexico, to begin the medical missionary work among the Spanish-speaking people of this country. He dedicated almost eight years of continuous work in this field amid great difficulties but had the satisfaction of seeing the Adventist movement permanently established in Mexico and a hospital in operation with a financially firm foundation.⁹

When Caviness ceased to be president of Battle Creek College, he was invited to participate in a translation of the Bible into Spanish in Mexico. The invitation arrived in a timely manner to Caviness, who apparently had lost all opportunity to continue collaborating in higher education. He liked the idea. In 1897, Caviness, accompanied by his wife and son, prepared to move to Guadalajara, Mexico.¹⁰ He worked there until his health prevented him from continuing. He died in 1922 at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.¹¹

Key Events That Led to the Organization of the Conference

The territory of the Central Mexican Mission encompassed the eight states of the center-west of the country:

Querétaro, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Nayarit, and Colima. The enormous extent of the territory was difficult to support from Mexico City, where the Central Mexican Mission headquarters was located. The membership growth in this vast territory required a closer and better quality of administrative, departmental, and pastoral care.¹² These eight states were thus organized as the West Mexican Mission on June 26, 1974, at the Inter-American mid-year board meetings, to begin its operations on January 10, 1975. The headquarters were established in Guadalajara. Membership and income data estimated as of December 31, 1973, were over 2,500 members with an estimated annual tithing of 850,000 Mexican pesos. It was the seventh mission organized in the territory of the Mexican Union.¹³ The organizing ceremony took place between January 16 and 18, 1975.¹⁴

On November 19, 2003, the North Mexican Union decided to recommend to the Inter-American Division the readjustment of the territory of the West Mexican Mission effective as of January 10, 2004. Their proposed action would create a new experimental field called Bajío Mission. The West Mexican Mission retained Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit, and Zacatecas. Bajío Mission took the territories of Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Querétaro, and Michoacán.¹⁵ The Inter-American Division, in turn, accepted and approved this recommendation at its midyear meeting held on May 18, 2004.¹⁶ On September 1–2, 2008, the West Mexican Mission changed its status from mission to conference.¹⁷

On January 15, 2016, the North Mexican Union decided to readjust the territory again, resulting in the birth of a new experimental field called the Northwestern Region. This time the West Mexican Conference kept Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit, while the Northwest Mexican Mission took Zacatecas, Durango, and the western part of the State of Coahuila.¹⁸

List of Presidents

West Mexican Mission: Neftalí Quintero Ábrego (1975–1977); Cristóbal Werekeitzen Bayardo (1977); Velino Salazar Escarpulli (1978–1981); Víctor Manuel Aispuro Reyes (1982–1986); Eduardo Chacón Ríos (1987–1988); Arnulfo Pimentel Sánchez (1988–1992); José Javier Sol Martínez (1992–1997); José Estanislao Dzul Trejo (1997–2001); Donato Ramírez Herrera (2001–2003); Omar Carballo Rodal (2003–2005); Raúl Alberto Escalante Casanova (2005–2008).¹⁹

West Mexican Conference: Raúl Alberto Escalante Casanova (2008–2012); Enrique Ignacio Bernal Ordorica (2012–).²⁰

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Velino Salazar E., *100 Años de Adventismo en México* (Montemorelos, N.L., México: Centro de Producción Unión Mexicana del Norte, 1997), 198.?
2. Documents from the archive of the West Mexican Conference Secretariat.?
- 3.

- Ibid.?
4. Salazar E., *100 Años de Adventismo en México*, 22–23.?
 5. Ciro Sepúlveda, *Nace un Movimiento* (Montemorelos, N. L. México: Publicaciones Interamericanas, 1983), 49.?
 6. Information about the first Adventist church in Mexico differs. The Mexico City church claims to be the first church opened in Mexico, in 1899. See <https://www.interamerica.org/es/2020/03/primera-iglesia-adventista-establecida-en-mexico-celebra-su-120-aniversario/>. However, “Window into Mexico,” in the November 2008 *Adventist World* says that the Guadalajara church opened in 1893.?
 7. Salazar E., *100 Años de Adventismo en México*, 23–36.?
 8. Félix Cortés A. and Velino Salazar E., *Esforzados y Valientes* (Montemorelos, N.L., México: Editorial Montemorelos S.A. de C. V.), 25.?
 9. Ibid.?
 10. Sepúlveda, *Nace un Movimiento*, 61.?
 11. Ibid.?
 12. Minutes of the Inter-American Division mid-year board meeting, June 26, 1974.?
 13. Minutes of the Inter-American Division mid-year board meeting, May 18, 2004.?
 14. Minutes of the Inter-American Division year-end board meeting, November 4, 2007.?
 15. Ibid.?
 16. Salazar E., *100 Años de Adventismo en México*, 194–195.?
 17. Minutes of the North Mexican Union year-end board meeting, November 19, 2003, action no. 366.?
 18. Minutes of the North Mexican Union board of directors meeting, January 15, 2010, action no. 871.?
 19. Service sheets from the archive of the West Mexican Conference Secretariat.?
 20. Service sheets from the archive of the West Mexican Conference Secretariat.?